

PRONGHORN HERD UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Herd Unit #11A
Nine Mile, Anthro
September 12, 2008

HERD UNIT BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Duchesne and Uintah counties - Boundary begins at Duchesne and US-191; southwest on US-191 to the Argyle Canyon road; southeast on this road to the Nine Mile Canyon road; east along this road to its end near Bulls Canyon; south from the end of this road to Nine Mile Creek; east along this creek to the Green River; north along this river to the Duchesne River; west along this river to US-40; west on US-40 to Duchesne. **Excluding all Indian Trust Lands within this boundary.** USGS 1:100,000 maps: Vernal, Seep Ridge, Duchesne, Price.

DESIGNATED PRONGHORN HABITAT LAND OWNERSHIP

HABITAT AND APPROXIMATE OWNERSHIP

Ownership	Yearlong range	
	Area (acres)	%
BLM	178,694	56
SITLA	22,583	7
DWR	3,322	1
PRIVATE	75,191	24
Ute Tribal Trust Lands	31,131	10
Forest Service	6,936	2
TOTAL	317,857	100

UNIT MANAGEMENT GOALS

Manage for a population of healthy animals capable of providing a broad range of recreational opportunities, to include hunting and viewing. Balance the pronghorn population with human needs, such as authorized livestock grazing rights, private land development rights, and local economies. Maintain the population at a level that is within the long term habitat capability.

POPULATION MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

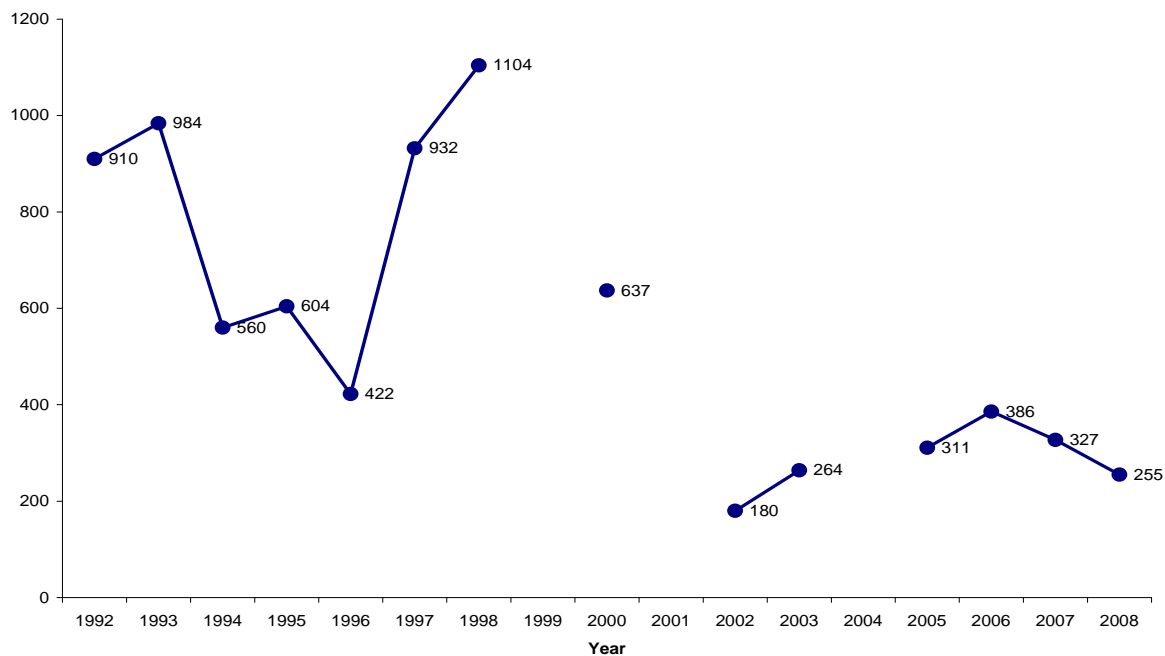
- ✓ Target Winter Herd Size - Achieve an estimated wintering population size of 1125 animals (approximately 844 aircraft-counted animals). The management plan will be reviewed on five year intervals to assess herd parameters and the validity of management goals and objectives.
- ✓ Herd Composition – Maintain a minimum postseason/spring aerial trend count buck to doe ratio of 25:100.
- ✓ Population Status - The pronghorn population has declined since reaching a peak of 1,104 animals counted in 1998. The 2008 annual aerial trend count survey produced only 255 pronghorn. The following table and graph summarize the pronghorn population status as reflected through annual aerial spring trend count surveys.

Anthro Antelope Population Trend

	Observed	Bucks	Does	Estimated*	B / 100 D
1992	910	181	729	1213	25
1993	984			1312	
1994	560	172	388	747	44
1995	604			805	
1996	422	90	326	563	28
1997	932			1243	
1998	1104	340	764	1472	45
1999	no flight			1550	
2000	637	163	474	850	34
2001	no flight				
2002	180	60	114	240	53
2003	264	64	189	350	34
2004	no flight			375	
2005	311	63	241	415	26
2006	386	49	337	515	15
2007	327	62	258	435	24
2008	255	72	175	340	41

*assumes 75% sightability

Anthro Pronghorn Flight Trend Count



POPULATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- ✓ Population supplementation - Beginning in December 2008 and continuing through January 2013, supplement the existing pronghorn population by translocating animals from Parker Mountain, or other source herds based on availability. Based on availability of animals, the DWR may transplant up to 50 animals per year. These transplants would occur each year, or until the estimated population meets/exceeds 80% of the estimated population objective. Release sites will include the Wells Draw area, Pariette Bench, Eightmile Flat, and Little Desert.
- ✓ Monitoring - Aerial and/or ground counts will be conducted annually to determine fawn recruitment, population status, buck/doe ratios, and range distribution. Aerial trend counts will be conducted in late winter/early spring, preseason herd classification will occur in July and August.
- ✓ Population – Hunts for bucks and/ or doe/fawn antelope will be recommended annually as needed to meet management goals. These will be reviewed by the Northeastern Regional Advisory Council and acted upon by the Utah Wildlife Board.

Limiting Factors

- ✓ Predation - Predation, especially by coyotes, can be limiting to pronghorn fawn survival and recruitment. Predator control work deemed prudent will be conducted within the guidelines of the DWR predator management policy/plan and the authorized plan of the administering land management agency.
- ✓ Habitat - Vegetative communities that dominate the areas of the herd unit frequented by pronghorn include salt desert shrub types on the lower elevation zones grading upward elevationally to Wyoming sage habitats. Annual precipitation generally varies from 6 to 8 inches in these vegetation types. Forb production is important for healthy fawn survival. Water distribution can be limiting but has been provided by the BLM and other conservation interests through guzzlers or other devices. During the past decade of drought, the poor maintenance condition of many of these artificial water sources limited their effectiveness. Repairs have been made and are continuing.

Depredation occurs to agricultural crops located principally in Sowers Canyon and Pleasant Valley. CWMU hunting and depredation based mitigation measures are used to control this segment of the pronghorn herd and provide a means for private landowners to benefit from agricultural impacts.

Natural gas and oil production is rapidly increasing on pronghorn range with subsequent vegetative removal limiting both forage availability and habitat effectiveness. Habitat loss and disturbance associated with drilling and other energy extraction activities may be a significant factor affecting pronghorn populations.

- ✓ Interspecific competition - No significant, long-term limitations generated by interspecific competition are evident. Pronghorn and livestock can generally exhibit a symbiotic relationship. Direct competition for winter browse forage has occurred during the drought when vegetative production was severely reduced. Dependent upon season of use, vegetative disturbance by cattle grazing may enhance the production of annual forbs and shrubs. Conversely, the suppression of forbs and shrubs by pronghorns may enhance grass production. Pronghorns exhibit minimal use of grass in their diets. Presently, all pronghorn habitat is grazed by domestic stock. Both cattle and sheep graze the unit during the winter period.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Livestock grazing - Support proper domestic grazing on all identified pronghorn habitat within approved grazing allotments and seasons.
- ✓ Water development - Develop, repair and enhance water sources to improve pronghorn habitat and distribution.
- ✓ Vegetation - Support and encourage land management agencies and livestock producers in range improvement practices.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- ✓ Water development - Due to low annual precipitation, ponds and other natural run-off catchments are limited in their duration. The construction and distribution of man-made guzzlers has provided a boon to pronghorn welfare and population distribution. Many of these structures have been repaired recently and are being maintained regularly to aid all wildlife in the salt desert shrub communities.
- ✓ Vegetation management - Low precipitation and the invasion threat of weedy species such as cheat grass, halogeton and Russian thistle limit possibilities for vegetation manipulation projects. The best approach for maintaining or altering vegetative community condition may be through properly targeting acceptable grazing utilization levels and seasons. Support for established domestic grazing under these parameters will continue.